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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1902
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4955
RUEHILL/AMCONSUL LAHORE 0267
BT
C O N F I D E N T I A L KARACHI 02848

STAT

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: SHJM, PK
SUBJECT: RASUL BAKSH PALLEJO: SENATOR MUNNIHAN

STAT

REF: (A) STATE 94335
- (B) 83 KARACHI 8929

1. (C) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. RASUL BAKSH PALLEJO, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE PAKISTAN AWAMI TEHRIQ (PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT) IS PRESENTLY BEING DETAINED IN LANDI JAIL, ABOUT 15 MILES FROM KARACHI. PALLEJO WAS TRANSFERRED THERE ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO AFTER REPORTS OF HIS DETERIORATING HEALTH APPEARED WHILE HE WAS IN CUSTODY IN LAHORE PRISON. PALLEJO WAS TREATED BRIEFLY IN A LAHORE HOSPITAL BEFORE BEING SENT TO LANDI. THE LATTER IS A JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER IN WHICH A NUMBER OF MRD POLITICAL ACTIVISTS ARE INCARCERATED.

3. PALLEJO, IN HIS LATE 50'S, IS A LAWYER FROM THATTA DISTRICT IN SIND. A LEFTIST, HE IS BETTER KNOWN FOR HIS ASSOCIATION WITH THE SINDHI AWAMI TEHRIQ (SAT), WHICH HE FOUNDED IN THE 1960S AND WHICH PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE DURING THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAMPAIGN IN RURAL SIND (REF B). PALLEJO'S REPUTATION AS A MARXIST SINDHI NATIONALIST REPORTEDLY PERSUASSED HIM TO ESTABLISH THE PAT IN ORDER TO DISARM ALLEGATIONS THAT HE FAVORED SIND'S SECESSION FROM PAKISTAN. LONG A CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE, PALLEJO WAS IMPRISONED FOR A TIME DURING THE AYUB KHAN AND BHUTTO PERIODS AS WELL AS BY THE ZIA REGIME. HE WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY IN EARLY 1981 REPORTEDLY AFTER DELIVERING AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT SPEECH AND CONVICTED UNDER MARTIAL LAW REGULATION 12 (PROHIBITING ANTI-STATE ACTIVITIES). PALLEJO WAS SENTENCED TO ONE YEAR'S RIGOROUS IMPRISONMENT (RI) AND A RS. 30,000 FINE. AFTER COMPLETING THE ONE YEAR SENTENCE AND AN ADDITIONAL SIX MONTHS FOR NON-PAYMENT OF THE FINE, PALLEJO WAS FURTHER DETAINED FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD.

4. PALLEJO'S POOR HEALTH HAS PROMPTED A SUSTAINED CAMPAIGN BY THE MEDIA, INTELLECTUALS, AND LEFTIST SYMPATHIZERS TO SECURE HIS RELEASE ON HUMANITARIAN

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GROUND AND THERE HAS BEEN SOME PRESS SPECULATION
THAT HE MAY BE PLACED UNDER HOUSE ARREST. THERE
IS NO SIGN, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOP IS PREPARED TO
FREE PALLEJO IN THE NEAR FUTURE. TO THE BEST OF
OUR INFORMATION, PALLEJO'S HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE
CHRONIC-BASICALLY ASTHMA-BUT NOT LIFE THREATENING.

THIBAULT

END OF MESSAGE

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